

Hometown Discount

Matthew 13:53-58

Introduction:

Attention:

Subject: Throughout Christian history many of Jesus' followers have experienced the truth of this teaching: those who have known them best from an early age on are often least willing to accept them as spiritually gifted or empowered.

Body:

I. Hometown Crowd

a. Just finished Teaching 13:1

- i. and it came to pass when Jesus finished") is found here, but now with the distinctive object τὰς παραβολὰς ταύτας, "these parables" (see further on 13:3). μετῆρεν ἐκεῖθεν, "he moved on from there," is general, functioning as a transition to the following episode in Nazareth, but probably a departure from Capernaum or its environs is meant.

b. Began Teaching

i. Nazareth

1. Nazareth is identified by Matthew (2:23) and Luke (1:26; 2:4, 39) as the village of Mary and Joseph, the place where Jesus grew up (Luke 2:39, 51) and the village he left to visit the towns and villages of Galilee to begin his ministry (Mark 1:9). Luke mentions a synagogue in Nazareth (4:16) where Jesus spoke as an adult and where his message was not well received (4:28–30). Evidently later in his ministry, it was well known that Jesus was from Nazareth (Matt 21:11), which did not always evoke an amiable response (cf. John 1:45–46).

ii. In Their Synagogue

1. "in their synagogue" (ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν), probably the very place in which he had worshiped as a young man before embarking on his ministry. Although no attention is given to the emotions of Jesus, this must have been a particularly momentous occasion for him.

II. Hometown Reaction

a. Astonished

- i. His audience reacts with amazement, as the crowds consistently do elsewhere (e.g., 7:28; 22:33). They recognize Jesus as wise. This is the third and final use of this adjective in Matthew (cf. 11:19; 12:42).
- ii. well over the years were “utterly amazed” (ἐκπλήσσεσθαι; cf. the same reaction in 7:28; 22:33). Their amazement, however, did not move them to faith but instead provoked skepticism. Their initial question, to be sure, expresses a degree of wonder and, finding no obvious answer, testifies inadvertently to the unique reality and authority represented by Jesus and his message
- iii. - **to cause to be filled with amazement to the point of being overwhelmed, amaze, astound, overwhelm**
- iv. The astonishment at Jesus’ teaching here is best linked with that of the crowds in 7:28; 22:33, where the positive impact of the teaching is stressed.

b. Questioned

i. Questioned

1. Those in the synagogue pursue their line of questioning about the origins of Jesus’ wisdom and mighty works by asking rhetorical questions about his family origins. There are three questions about Jesus’ family: the first concerning his father (identified by trade); the second dealing with his mother (identified by name) and his brothers (also identified by name); and the third dealing with his sisters (the only ones clearly claimed to be still present in the town)

ii. Wisdom

1. Honored- **to being without honor or respect, dishonored, despised**
2. Matthew may or may not view Jesus as Wisdom personified. In this text the congregation is merely commending him for his astuteness and morality. The Old Testament consistently defines wisdom as beginning with the fear of the Lord (e.g., Prov 1:7). In light of v. 58 and the fixed liturgy of the synagogue service, which would normally have precluded Jesus’ interrupting worship to work wonders
3. What indeed is the source of ἡ σοφία αὕτη καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις, “this wisdom and the miraculous deeds”? (The only two other occurrences of σοφία, “wisdom,” in Matthew are in 11:19 and 12:42;

4. **the capacity to understand and function accordingly, *wisdom*.**
transcendent wisdom
 5. Wisdom' must point to that about Jesus' teaching which is transparently insightful. Wisdom has been associated with Jesus already in 11:19; 12:42
- iii. Miraculous Powers
1. the "miraculous powers" of v. 54 probably refer to what Jesus has done elsewhere, reports of which have followed him home.
 2. for the word δυνάμεις, "miraculous deeds," see esp. 11:20–23.)
The same question is asked at the end of v 56.
- c. Question Origin
- i. Carpenter's Son
 1. **But the skepticism underlying their question is revealed in the pronoun τούτῳ, "to this one," as also in the questions that follow. "This one" they knew, and thus they judged him by their previous knowledge of him.**
 2. No 'mighty works' have been reported here, but perhaps we are to understand from the pattern established in 4:23; 9:35 that teaching had been accompanied by healing here too. A general reference to previous mighty works is also possible, and a back reference to the mighty works of 11:23 may be intended
 - ii. Mary's Son
 - iii. Brothers
 1. James, Joseph, Simon, Judas (Jude)
 - iv. Sisters
 - v. With Us
 1. On the biological and spiritual relation of the rest of Jesus' family to him, see comments under 12:46–50. Though they do not yet support him, James and Jude (the abbreviated form of Judas) will later distinguish themselves as Christian leaders (on James, see Acts 15:1–29) and as writers of inspired epistles. Only here does Matthew indicate that Jesus had an unspecified number of sisters as well
 2. In succession the questions refer to Jesus' father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Each in effect says, "We know this Jesus well." Only here in the Gospels do we discover that Jesus was ὁ τοῦ τέκτονος υἱός, "the son of the carpenter" (and thus Jesus, following the profession of his father, is called "the carpenter" in the parallel in Mark 6:3). τέκτων can mean "builder" as well as "carpenter." The

name Joseph is restricted in Matthew to 1:16–20; Joseph probably had died before the public ministry of Jesus.

3. The fresh, generalised ‘where ... from (πόθεν)’ question creates a minor chiasm around the questions about Jesus’ family and makes it clear that the information about his family is seen as having, in the minds of the questioners, a vital influence on how the ‘where ... from’ question is to be answered
- vi. Where did He get all these things
1. The people’s amazement increases because they know the members of his family, who seem ordinary enough. Residents of Nazareth probably also remember Jesus’ childhood and young adulthood, which were apparently not particularly distinguished (see comments under introduction to 3:1–4:16).
 2. The point is the same: Jesus and his family are well known. And thus the initial question is repeated: “How did all of these things [ταῦτα πάντα] come to this man?” Although that question remains unanswered, it is clear from the following statement that they found it intolerable that Jesus spoke as he did with the undeniable implication of his own self-importance. Thus, ἐσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ, “they were scandalized by him”
 3. Jesus would not have had a lot of inherited honour as a member of a family of modest means in a carpenter’s household; in a strongly hierarchical society Jesus did not come from an appropriate stratum for a person of major importance. The person who seemed to have found a short-cut to power and significance could readily be accused of engagement in the black arts (collusion with the devil).
- d. Took Offense
- i. Yet despite their amazement, Jesus’ fellow Nazarenes cannot accept his claims about himself (cf. Luke 4:17–21), and they take particular offense when he reminds them of God’s past preference for certain Gentiles over many Israelites (cf. Luke 4:25–30). “Took offense” in v. 57a (or *scandalized*, on which see comments under 5:29–30) may also carry the sense of *refused to believe*.
 - ii. by refusing to believe in him
 - iii. And they took offence at him’ provides a negative counterpoint to 11:6: these people cannot be declared fortunate. The Pharisees will be reported as taking offence at Jesus in 15:12. Where the Matthean and Markan forms of the proverbial saying used by Jesus set the dishonouring of a prophet at home against the background of being honoured elsewhere,

III. Homegrown Responds

a. Without Honor

i. Prophet

1. The word προφήτης, “prophet,” is appropriate because it was particularly the teaching of Jesus (cf. ἐδίδασκεν, “he was teaching”; v 54) that elicited the wonder of the people. Although it was an inadequate view (cf. 16:14), Jesus was widely held to be a prophet (cf. 21:11, 46). The people in his own home town, however, and even his own household or family (cf. Mark 3:21) were outraged and indignant at the pretensions of one who was to them so familiar and hence thought to be ordinary
2. The kind of contempt for the familiar which Jesus’ proverb appeals to is a widespread phenomenon in human affairs. Beyond what has already been suggested above, such a contempt for the familiar is also likely to be involved in the rhetorical questions of 13:55–56.

ii. Without Honor

iii. Hometown or Home

1. **a relatively restricted area as locale of one’s immediate family and ancestry, *home town, one’s own part of the country***
2. **The primary mistake of the people of Nazareth was their automatic limitation of Jesus to the familiar framework in which they had previously known him. This made them unable to evaluate Jesus in terms of his message and deeds. It made impossible a fair consideration of who Jesus was and what he had come to offer. Familiarity with Jesus became a liability, since he was thereby forced into a preconceived framework. In this respect outsiders have a distinct advantage. If we widen the scope of this observation, it can be seen again clearly in one of the major transitions of the Gospel: the transition of the kingdom from the Jews to the Gentiles. For it is just this kind of familiarity and set of preconceptions that have been responsible for Jewish unbelief in the gospel, and the lack of the same may have made the Gentiles more objective in their understanding and thus more receptive of the good news of the kingdom. This is a generalization, of course, but it may be true more often than not that familiarity and all that goes with it do not dispose people to see what is really before their eyes. But tragically the central mysteries of the gospel, the Messiah who suffers death on the cross and the centrality of that death to the realization of the kingdom, violated Jewish preconceptions and thus prohibited their reception of the gospel (cf. Rom 9:32–33)**

- b. Did not do many miracles
 - i. Because of Unbelief
 - 1. Although he apparently performed some healings in Nazareth (cf. Mark 6:5), he did not do many (although the people responded to them, or at least the reports that had reached them, v 54). The reason for this was τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν, “their unbelief” (the only occurrence of the word in Matthew). This unbelief interprets the sense in which they were scandalized by Jesus (v 57a). Although Matthew avoids referring to inability, clearly Jesus’ ministry in their midst was severely restricted by their rejection of his message and his claims. As before (cf. 12:38–39), Jesus will not perform miracles in order to counteract unbelief.

Word Studies

Hometown - a relatively restricted area as locale of one’s immediate family and ancestry, *home town, one’s own part of the country*¹

¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 788.

Nazareth - Nazareth is identified by Matthew (2:23) and Luke (1:26; 2:4, 39) as the village of Mary and Joseph, the place where Jesus grew up (Luke 2:39, 51) and the village he left to visit the towns and villages of Galilee to begin his ministry (Mark 1:9). Luke mentions a synagogue in Nazareth (4:16) where Jesus spoke as an adult and where his message was not well received (4:28–30). Evidently later in his ministry, it was well known that Jesus was from Nazareth (Matt 21:11), which did not always evoke an amiable response (cf. John 1:45–46).²

Astonished - **to cause to be filled with amazement to the point of being overwhelmed, *amaze, astound, overwhelm***³

Wisdom - the capacity to understand and function accordingly, ***wisdom***. transcendent wisdom

Offended- by refusing to believe in him or by becoming apostate⁴

Honored- **to being without honor or respect, *dishonored, despised***⁵

Commentary Studies

Comment

53 The formula that marks the ending of each of the major discourses (καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, “and it came to pass when Jesus finished”) is found here, but now with the distinctive object τὰς παραβολὰς ταύτας, “these parables” (see further on 13:3). μετῆρην

² James F. Strange, “[Nazareth \(Place\)](#),” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1050.

³ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 308.

⁴ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 926.

⁵ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 149.

ἐκεῖθεν, “he moved on from there,” is general, functioning as a transition to the following episode in Nazareth, but probably a departure from Capernaum or its environs is meant.

54 Jesus had left Nazareth after the arrest of John the Baptist, moving to Capernaum (cf. 4:13). Although there are indications of a wide ministry (e.g., 9:35; 11:1), the narratives focus on Capernaum and the area around the Sea of Galilee (14:13 assumes his return to this area). At this point in the narrative, however, Jesus returns to his πατρίδα, “home town” (the word can mean “home country” or “home territory,” but the context suggests “home town”), and teaches (ἐδίδασκεν, “was teaching,” i.e., for some time, or less probably inceptive, “began to teach”) “in their synagogue” (ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν), probably the very place in which he had worshiped as a young man before embarking on his ministry. Although no attention is given to the emotions of Jesus, this must have been a particularly momentous occasion for him. Here τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν, “their synagogue,” is not, as elsewhere (4:23), the synagogue of the Jews, thus reflecting a break with Judaism (contra Luz), but merely the synagogue of the people of Nazareth. As the result of his teaching, the people there who had known him and his family so well over the years were “utterly amazed” (ἐκπλήσσεσθαι; cf. the same reaction in 7:28; 22:33). Their amazement, however, did not move them to faith but instead provoked skepticism. Their initial question, to be sure, expresses a degree of wonder and, finding no obvious answer, testifies inadvertently to the unique reality and authority represented by Jesus and his message. What indeed is the source of ἡ σοφία αὕτη καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις, “this wisdom and the miraculous deeds”? (The only two other occurrences of σοφία, “wisdom,” in Matthew are in 11:19 and 12:42; for the word δυνάμεις, “miraculous deeds,” see esp. 11:20–23.) The same question is asked at the end of v 56. The question may imply the possibility of a demonic source for Jesus’ wisdom and power (cf. 9:34; 12:24). But the skepticism underlying their question is revealed in the pronoun τοῦτω, “to this one,” as also in the questions that follow. “This one” they knew, and thus they judged him by their previous knowledge of him.

55–57a In succession the questions refer to Jesus’ father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Each in effect says, “We know this Jesus well.” Only here in the Gospels do we discover that Jesus was ὁ τοῦ τέκτονος υἱός, “the son of the carpenter” (and thus Jesus, following the profession of his father, is called “the carpenter” in the parallel in Mark 6:3). τέκτων can mean “builder” as well as “carpenter.” The name Joseph is restricted in Matthew to 1:16–20; Joseph probably had died before the public ministry of Jesus. The mother of Jesus, Μαριάμ, lit. “Miriam” (the Semitic form of the name), is mentioned in Matthew (in its alternate form, “Maria”) only in 1:16–20 and 2:11. For a parallel allusion to the mother and father of Jesus, see John 6:42. The brothers of Jesus are also mentioned, not by name however, in 12:46, 48. In the remainder of the NT only the names of James (nine references) and Jude (Jude 1) occur again. The people of the synagogue knew Jesus’ brothers by name. The sisters (ἀδελφαί) of Jesus are mentioned in the NT only here, in Mark 3:32, and in the parallel to the present passage, Mark 6:3. No names of the sisters are given, but Matthew adds πᾶσαι, “all,” for inclusiveness. By far the most natural understanding is the literal one, that these were literally younger (half-) brothers and sisters of Jesus, the children of Mary. Apart from further evidence from the context, it is wrong to press the exceptional Semitic usage on the words (i.e., for “kin”; cf. Gen 13:8; 14:14; Lev 10:4; etc.), thus making these persons

lit. literally

“cousins” or relatives of Jesus in order to defend the Roman Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary—an idea found nowhere in the NT πρὸς ἡμᾶς, “with us,” indicates that the sisters still dwell in Nazareth and are accordingly well known to the inhabitants. The point is the same: Jesus and his family are well known. And thus the initial question is repeated: “How did all of these things [ταῦτα πάντα] come to this man?” Although that question remains unanswered, it is clear from the following statement that they found it intolerable that Jesus spoke as he did with the undeniable implication of his own self-importance. Thus, ἐσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ, “they were scandalized by him” (see *Comment* on 11:6; cf. 13:21, where the same verb is used). The interpretation of this tradition in the Fourth Gospel is revealing: “they said, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say “I have come down from heaven?” ’ ” (John 6:42; cf. John 7:15).

57b Despite some parallels in thought, the logion of Jesus, “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and in his house,” is not found as such outside the NT (see too Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; John 4:44). The word προφήτης, “prophet,” is appropriate because it was particularly the teaching of Jesus (cf. ἐδίδασκεν, “he was teaching”; v 54) that elicited the wonder of the people. Although it was an inadequate view (cf. 16:14), Jesus was widely held to be a prophet (cf. 21:11, 46). The people in his own home town, however, and even his own household or family (cf. Mark 3:21) were outraged and indignant at the pretensions of one who was to them so familiar and hence thought to be ordinary (for the same point, but with a wider scope, see John 1:11).

58 Although he apparently performed some healings in Nazareth (cf. Mark 6:5), he did not do many (although the people responded to them, or at least the reports that had reached them, v 54). The reason for this was τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν, “their unbelief” (the only occurrence of the word in Matthew). This unbelief interprets the sense in which they were scandalized by Jesus (v 57a). Although Matthew avoids referring to inability, clearly Jesus’ ministry in their midst was severely restricted by their rejection of his message and his claims. As before (cf. 12:38–39), Jesus will not perform miracles in order to counteract unbelief.

Explanation

The primary mistake of the people of Nazareth was their automatic limitation of Jesus to the familiar framework in which they had previously known him. This made them unable to evaluate Jesus in terms of his message and deeds. It made impossible a fair consideration of who Jesus was and what he had come to offer. Familiarity with Jesus became a liability, since he was thereby forced into a preconceived framework. In this respect outsiders have a distinct advantage. If we widen the scope of this observation, it can be seen again clearly in one of the major transitions of the Gospel: the transition of the kingdom from the Jews to the Gentiles. For it is just this kind of familiarity and set of preconceptions that have been responsible for Jewish unbelief in the gospel, and the lack of the same may have made the Gentiles more objective in their understanding and thus more receptive of the good news of the kingdom. This is a generalization, of course, but it may be true more often than not that familiarity and all that goes with it do not dispose people to see what is really before their eyes. But tragically the central mysteries of the gospel, the Messiah who suffers death on the cross and the centrality of that death to the

realization of the kingdom, violated Jewish preconceptions and thus prohibited their reception of the gospel (cf. Rom 9:32–33).⁶

13:53–57a As with 8:1 and 11:1, 13:53 rounds off the previous discourse but more closely introduces Jesus' subsequent ministry. Jesus proceeds to Nazareth (v. 54a), which Matthew describes only as his *patris* (either *homeland* or "hometown," but since Jesus is already in Galilee, "hometown" must be the sense). A much fuller account appears in Luke 4:16–30. Luke and Matthew probably record the same event, but Luke has moved his version forward as an introduction to the key themes of Jesus' ministry (as Luke 4:14b–15 itself hints).

Jesus returns to his practice of teaching in the synagogues (cf. 4:23), though this may well be the first time he has spoken in the synagogue in Nazareth. His audience reacts with amazement, as the crowds consistently do elsewhere (e.g., 7:28; 22:33). They recognize Jesus as wise. This is the third and final use of this adjective in Matthew (cf. 11:19; 12:42). Some have seen in these references a distinctively Matthean "Wisdom Christology,"³⁶ but the data on which this hypothesis is based are rather slim. Matthew may or may not view Jesus as Wisdom personified. In this text the congregation is merely commending him for his astuteness and morality. The Old

⁶ Donald A. Hagner, [Matthew 1–13](#), vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 404–407.

³⁶ See esp. M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

Testament consistently defines wisdom as beginning with the fear of the Lord (e.g., Prov 1:7). In light of v. 58 and the fixed liturgy of the synagogue service, which would normally have precluded Jesus' interrupting worship to work wonders, the "miraculous powers" of v. 54 probably refer to what Jesus has done elsewhere, reports of which have followed him home. The people's amazement increases because they know the members of his family, who seem ordinary enough. Residents of Nazareth probably also remember Jesus' childhood and young adulthood, which were apparently not particularly distinguished (see comments under introduction to 3:1–4:16).

Verses 54b–56 are even somewhat disparaging, inasmuch as Jesus' up-bringing would point out that he had received no formal rabbinic training.³⁷ "Carpenter's son" recalls Joseph's occupation. In light of the wording of the questions about the rest of his family, one would have expected the crowds to ask, "Isn't his father the carpenter?" This, coupled with the lack of reference to Joseph anywhere in the Gospels or Acts following Jesus' infancy, has suggested to many that Joseph may be dead by this time, but no one knows for sure. A "carpenter" could also be a *stone mason*.³⁸ Mark's account shows that Jesus had practiced Joseph's trade prior to his baptism and public ministry (Mark 6:3).

On the biological and spiritual relation of the rest of Jesus' family to him, see comments under 12:46–50. Though they do not yet support him, James and Jude (the abbreviated form of Judas) will later distinguish themselves as Christian leaders (on James, see Acts 15:1–29) and as writers of inspired epistles. Only here does Matthew indicate that Jesus had an unspecified number of sisters as well.

Yet despite their amazement, Jesus' fellow Nazarenes cannot accept his claims about himself (cf. Luke 4:17–21), and they take particular offense when he reminds them of God's past preference for certain Gentiles over many Israelites (cf. Luke 4:25–30). "Took offense" in v. 57a (or *scandalized*, on which see comments under 5:29–30) may also carry the sense of *refused to believe*.

13:57b–58 Matthew, however, does not itemize all these objections. Instead, he proceeds immediately to Jesus' pronouncement, which explains his role as a prophet and accounts for his rejection. Verse 57b sounds like a popular proverb that was already in circulation.³⁹ The reaction of Jesus' "own house" is vividly depicted in Mark 3:21. Throughout Christian history many of Jesus' followers have experienced the truth of this teaching: those who have known them best from an early age on are often least willing to accept them as spiritually gifted or empowered. The upshot of Jesus' stay in Nazareth is that he severely curtails his miracle-working ministry

³⁷ Sand, *Matthäus*, 301 (citing Gaechter), notes that the upshot of all these questions is to imply, "Surely he is just one of us."

³⁸ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon* 1:520, define τέκτων as a "builder," who would be "skilled in the use of wood and stone and possibly even metal."

³⁹ See J. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (Freiburg: Herder, 1986–88), 1:517, for possible sources.

there (v. 58), particularly his healings (cf. Mark 6:5).⁴⁰ Significantly, “their lack of faith” does not refer to inadequate confidence on the part of his followers but to the rejection of Jesus by unbelievers. On the relationship between faith and miracles, cf. above under 9:34. On refusing to work wonders to satisfy skeptics, see comments under 12:38–42.⁷

Matthew simplifies the response statement by treating it as general to those present in the synagogue.⁴ He may already have his eye on the wording of the proverb to come in 13:57, which implies a total failure to honour Jesus in his hometown. **The astonishment at Jesus’ teaching here**

⁴⁰ Matthew’s “did not ... because” correctly interprets Mark’s “could not.” It was not that Jesus was actually impotent in the face of unbelief but that he chose to limit himself in this way.

⁷ Craig Blomberg, [Matthew](#), vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 227–229.

⁴ Mk. 6:2 has ‘many, as they heard’.

is best linked with that of the crowds in 7:28; 22:33,⁵ where the positive impact of the teaching is stressed. Matthew produces a simple two-pronged question out of Mark's inelegant and rather complicated formulation. The Pharisees have already raised the question of where it all comes from in 9:34; 12:23, and answered in terms of power from the evil one.⁶

'Wisdom' must point to that about Jesus' teaching which is transparently insightful. Wisdom has been associated with Jesus already in 11:19; 12:42. No 'mighty works' have been reported here, but perhaps we are to understand from the pattern established in 4:23; 9:35 that teaching had been accompanied by healing here too. A general reference to previous mighty works is also possible, and a back reference to the mighty works of 11:23 may be intended.⁷

13:55 Those in the synagogue pursue their line of questioning about the origins of Jesus' wisdom and mighty works by asking rhetorical questions about his family origins. There are three questions about Jesus' family: the first concerning his father (identified by trade); the second dealing with his mother (identified by name) and his brothers (also identified by name); and the third dealing with his sisters (the only ones clearly claimed to be still present in the town).⁸

Matthew may have considered it rather odd to identify Jesus at this stage of his story as 'the carpenter' (as Mk. 6:3) since he has long since clearly not been functioning as a carpenter.⁹ Given the common patrilineal passing of occupations, it probably seemed evident to Matthew from the Markan text that Jesus had earlier worked at carpentry for the very reason that Joseph was a carpenter. A carpenter (τέκτων) was typically a woodworking craftsman who built furniture and

⁵ Cf. Mt. 15:31, which matches the use of a ὥστε construction here but uses θαυμάζειν for the amazement.

⁶ The origin of John's authority will be discussed in Mt. 21:23–27 with the use of πόθεν ('from where') in v. 25.

⁷ Thus far Jesus' healings have been spoken of only as δυνάμεις ('mighty works') in the block Mt. 11:20–24, which is a modest argument in favour of a Capernaum location for 13:54–58.

⁸ Mk. 6:54–55 has two rhetorical questions: the first identifies Jesus by trade and as the son of Mary and brother of the same named brothers; the second claims that Jesus' sisters are present in the town. The reference to Mary and not to Joseph has sometimes been taken as a slur on Mary, but Ilan, 'Metronymes', 23–45, has shown that such is not the case in extant cases of men being referred to in terms of their mothers. It is possible that the Markan language reflects the significance of Mary in the early church.

⁹ Later rabbis often had a trade: Shammai was a carpenter (*b. Šab.* 31a). The apostle Paul combined a trade with his itinerant ministry (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thes. 2:9). Nothing in the tradition, however, suggests that Jesus combined his ministry with working for a living (cf. Mt. 27:55; Mk. 15:41; Lk. 8:3).

utensils, doors and doorframes, and prepared roofing beams; he may at times have doubled as a brick mason.¹⁰

Having borrowed ‘the son of’ for the question about the father from the Markan formulation concerning Mary, and prompted by the list of names that he is about to give, Matthew now adds ‘called’ and inverts the manner in which the relationships are introduced.¹¹ No names were used in 12:46–50, but the brothers (and probably sisters) of Jesus are introduced. For the name Mary we reach back to the infancy materials. The names of the brothers play no greater role than to concretely earth Jesus into his human family of origin.¹² Though of importance for some Christian traditions, the exact biological relationships involved have no particular importance for Matthew’s story.¹³

13:56 Mark’s emphasis on the presence of Jesus’ sisters is strengthened by the addition of ‘all’.¹⁴ Since large families would have been quite common, the number of siblings attributed to Jesus is quite reasonable. The fresh, generalised ‘where ... from (πόθεν)’ question creates a minor chiasm around the questions about Jesus’ family and makes it clear that the information about his family is seen as having, in the minds of the questioners, a vital influence on how the ‘where ... from’ question is to be answered.¹⁵ Why is it such a problem that Jesus is from a hometown

¹⁰ The meaning of the term is, however, not precise since derivative senses developed involving first craftsmanship in other materials and then, no doubt initially metaphorically, skilled activity in anything from poetry to medicine.

¹¹ ‘Mother called Mary’ instead of ‘son of Mary’; ‘his brothers [called] ...’ instead of ‘brother of ...’. The change means that ‘his brothers’ can now parallel the following ‘his sisters’. If Matthew had continued the Markan pattern after introducing ‘son of the carpenter’, he would have produced ‘son of the carpenter and (son of) of Mary’, which would have created a tension with his careful formulation in Mt. 1–2.

Matthew also inverts the order of Judas and Joseph and prefers the LXX form Ἰωσήφ (‘Joseph’) to the hellenised Ἰωσήζ (‘Joses’).

¹² We know of James otherwise from Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9; Jas. 1:1; Jude 1, and Jude from Jude 1. Cf. Jn. 7:5; 1 Cor. 9:5.

¹³ The coincidence of names (Mary as mother of a James and a Joseph) in Mt. 27:56 makes room for the possibility (remotely) that the sons in 13:55 are children of another Mary who was a close relative, but it certainly requires no such identification.

¹⁴ In compensation, and probably because it seemed redundant, Matthew drops Mark’s ‘here’.

¹⁵ πόθεν τούτῳ (‘where this fellow ... from’) is repeated from Mt. 13:54; ταῦτα (‘these things’) was ‘left over’ from the reformulation of Mk. 6:2; πάντα (‘all’) adds emphasis, as πᾶσαι (‘all’) did earlier in the verse. The larger chiasm identified by Davies and Allison,

background? Perhaps the role of family honour in ancient societies throws some light: Jesus would not have had a lot of inherited honour as a member of a family of modest means in a carpenter's household;¹⁶ in a strongly hierarchical society Jesus did not come from an appropriate stratum for a person of major importance.¹⁷ The person who seemed to have found a short-cut to power and significance could readily be accused of engagement in the black arts (collusion with the devil).

13:57 'And they took offence at him' provides a negative counterpoint to 11:6: these people cannot be declared fortunate. The Pharisees will be reported as taking offence at Jesus in 15:12. Where the Matthean and Markan forms of the proverbial saying used by Jesus set the dishonouring of a prophet at home against the background of being honoured elsewhere, the Lukan form focusses narrowly on the failure to be honoured at home (as does Jn. 4:44).¹⁸ Does Matthew drop Mark's 'among his own relatives' as a near repetition of 'in his house (οἰκία)',¹⁹ or to remove any suggestion that the members of Jesus' family are directly involved in taking offence at Jesus—in which case οἰκία will have a meaning similar to πατήρ and Matthew will have created his own synonymous parallelism? Though the latter would fit the loss of Mk. 3:21, the unusual meaning for οἰκία required and the resulting artistically rather flat repetition produced suggest that we should favour the former.²⁰ The kind of contempt for the familiar which Jesus' proverb appeals to is a widespread phenomenon in human affairs. Beyond what has already been suggested above, such a contempt for the familiar is also likely to be involved in the rhetorical questions of 13:55–56.

Matthew, 2:451 (largely following van Segbroeck, 'Jésus rejeté', 184), is less certain. They also link the uses of 'hometown' in vv. 54a and 57b and the amazement of v. 54b with the offence of v. 57a. The case for this larger chiasm could be strengthened slightly by noting the link between the synagogue location in v. 54a and the use of 'there' (referring to the synagogue location) in v. 58 (bundled with v. 57b).

¹⁶ Carpenters were artisans and not peasants and would therefore be among the relatively well-to-do of nonaristocratic society.

¹⁷ The fact of coming from a modest hometown would itself not help (cf. Jn. 1:46). It is less likely that the Johannine thought that the origins of the messiah will be unknown (7:27) plays any role here.

¹⁸ Jeremiah is not honoured by the people of Anathoth (11:21; 12:6; cf. 1:1), but neither is he more widely honoured in any consistent manner. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:461, cite parallel sentiments but not a proverb that Jesus could be quoting or modifying.

¹⁹ Mark probably thinks in terms of concentric circles.

²⁰ Though the proverb makes its statements in a general form, it need not be the case that Matthew thereby indicts all the members of Jesus' household of origin.

A prophetic identity for Jesus does not have the significance for Matthew that it does for Luke. For the most part 'prophet' used of Jesus is a designation that reflects something of his significance and impact but falls short of marking a proper recognition of his identity.²¹ Matthew does, however, connect Jesus with a prophetic identity in 12:39, where Jesus is like Jonah as a prophet of judgment who marks in the unfolding of his own ministry, and finally and especially in his death, the rejection by his own generation of the ways of God (see discussion there). It is likely that something of this is in mind here in 13:57, especially since, in 14:1–12 to follow, John the Baptist dies at the hands of the governing authority, though one whom the crowd regarded as a prophet—a narrative which is clearly intended to foreshadow the parallel situation to develop with regard to Jesus.²² This in turn raises the question of whether even the term πατρις has been chosen for its double sense ('hometown' or 'homeland') in order to mark the event in Jesus' hometown as a foreshadowing of what is to come, at the national level, in Jerusalem.

13:58 The editing of Mark makes it clear that Jesus is no victim of circumstances (not: 'he was not able to', but rather 'he did not [i.e., he chose not to]'). Nor is Jesus any longer surprised at the unbelief. Jesus' miracle-working power was still evident (it has been commented on in v. 54), but Jesus limits its scope in the face of unbelief. Chaps. 8–9 emphasise the importance of faith for Jesus' ministry of healing (see discussion at 8:10),²³ and the note will be struck again in 15:28.⁸

²¹ See Mt. 16:14; 21:11, 46.

²² See Mt. 16:14; 21:11, and esp. v. 46.

²³ See Mt. 8:10, 13; 9:2, 22, 28, 29.

⁸ John Nolland, [*The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 574–577.